

COMMENTARY

THE COMMUNIST TERMS FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

Have They Changed?

G. F. HUDSON

IT IS always helpful when people take the trouble to define the words they use in political controversy, and Soviet propaganda has been at pains to explain what we should understand by "peaceful co-existence." According to a recent exposition in *Soviet News* it comprises the three principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity, non-aggression, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. This is, of course, the formula that has been used in the agreements between China and India and between China and Burma, and it is reminiscent of the bilateral non-aggression pacts which were once so freely offered

by Stalin and Hitler and were preferred by some threatened nations to a system of collective security. It is not enough, however, for a critic of Soviet policy to point to the disturbing precedents of yesterday or merely to warn against too easy acceptance of the belief that the Muscovite mischief-maker is now at last really a reformed character; the campaign for peaceful co-existence needs to be studied in relation to the specific problems and needs confronting Communist policy-makers in the circumstances of world affairs at the present time.

FOR months now our Western skies have been bright with doves from the East, but some of our warier bird-watchers have from the first wondered whether they were not animated decoys. Among these wary observers is G. F. HUDSON, a contemporary historian with a long memory. Our readers will undoubtedly read his report with special attention in view of the Soviets' recent *démarches* on Germany and European security, and Red China's aggressive moves to "liberate" Formosa, as well as her condemnation of captured American aviators to long years of prison. Mr. Hudson is director of the newly formed Center for Far Eastern Studies of St. Antony's College at Oxford, and political analyst for the *London Economist*. He served in the British Foreign Office during the war.

FIRST of all, we need to remind ourselves that the idea of peaceful co-existence belongs to the world of liberal thought, not to that of Marxism-Leninism. It implies that there is no fundamental and ineluctable conflict dividing mankind and soluble only through the use of force; it assumes that, though wars between sovereign states may occur, they are not inevitable and can be prevented through statesmanship with the aid of some form of collective international organization. Relations of states on this view are entirely external and each one has the right to manage its internal affairs without interference from abroad, the national units functioning under law as constituents of an international order irrespective of their domestic social and political systems. In con-

trast to this, a doctrine that proclaims the need for a universal violent revolution to be carried out by an internationally organized political movement, is necessarily incompatible with such a pacific ideal. As the dogma was stated in a resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928:

The overthrow of capitalism is impossible without violence, i. e. without armed uprisings and wars against the bourgeoisie. In our era of imperialist wars and world revolution, revolutionary civil wars of the proletarian dictatorship against the bourgeoisie, wars of the proletariat against the bourgeois states and national revolutionary wars of oppressed peoples against imperialism are unavoidable.

No distinction is drawn here between purely civil wars and wars between "bourgeois" and "proletarian" states. Similarly Stalin in his *Problems of Leninism* laid down that "the revolution victorious in one country must not consider itself a self-contained entity, but a support, a means of speeding the victory of the proletariat in other countries." In the years when Western opinion kept on hoping that Bolshevism would gradually subside into a mere internal affair of the Russian people, Stalin's assertion of the principle of "socialism in one country" in his struggle against Trotsky was generally interpreted as a renunciation of the aim of world revolution in favor of a program of merely domestic transformation. But in 1939 an authoritative defense of Stalin against Trotskyite criticisms by the leading British Communist J. R. Campbell, *Soviet Policy and Its Critics*, emphasized—during the heyday of the Popular Front and class collaboration against fascism—that Stalinism did not mean what the liberal friends of the Soviet Union were insisting that it did:

The Russian workers and their Communist Party have always recognized the need for rendering fraternal assistance to the workers of other countries engaged in decisive struggles. . . . There was no controversy therefore as to whether the Soviet proletariat should aid the revolutionary struggle of the workers in other countries.

This book was indeed written, not to re-

assure liberals of the pacific and law-abiding character of Stalin's regime, but to convince Communists that Stalin had not betrayed the cause of world revolution, as the Trotskyites claimed that he had. And Stalin himself was soon to demonstrate by deeds the justice of the case his devotee had made for him. Within ten years of the publication of Campbell's book the number of human beings in the world under Communist rule had trebled and the number of Communist-governed states had increased from one to nine; wherever in the course of the Second World War the Soviet armed forces had advanced, there the Communists and their stooges had been raised to power. Stalin unfortunately was not able to demonstrate before the eyes of Trotsky this proof of his loyalty to the cause of Lenin, for he had had Trotsky assassinated before the triumphant advances of the Soviet power that had spread Communist domination from the Elbe to the Yellow Sea. But at any rate by 1950 nobody could any longer denounce Stalin for failure to extend the frontiers of the faith, and the Stalinist zealot could claim that his master's earlier caution and dissimulation, his Popular Fronts and his alliances with the Western democracies, had been the essential preliminaries to his success—for had he not thereby averted a coalition of the Great Powers against Russia and so lulled the suspicions of his principal wartime allies that he was able to seize control of one country after another under their very noses before they realized what was happening?

CERTAINLY, between the wars the Soviet Union practiced peaceful co-existence with capitalist states as far as the actual use of armed forces was concerned (except for Mongolia and Manchuria, which were only in the margin of the world-picture). There was, however, always the Comintern as an obstacle to normal and friendly relations between Communist Russia and other countries, even after the expansionist drives of Nazi Germany and Japan had brought Russia out of isolation into a system of foreign alliances. If an unsuspecting confidence was

to be built up in the minds of leading statesmen of allied nations, this open and formal link between the rulers of the Soviet Union and the Communist parties of other countries had to be eliminated, and Stalin did not hesitate, when he considered that the situation required it, to dissolve the Comintern and to bid the American Communist party abolish itself. How could anyone fail to trust Russia after such a convincing manifestation of the will to live as a good neighbor?

The confidence created in the Western democracies by these calculated gestures was reflected in their wartime censorship of news and opinion unfavorable to the Soviet Union, in their universal make-believe about the unity of the Big Three, in their headlong demobilization of forces supposed to be superfluous after the collapse of Germany and Japan, in their desperate efforts to appease Stalin. When at last the Western statesmen were unable any longer to conceal either from their peoples or from themselves the breakdown of their hopes, it was too late to save what might have been saved by insight and foresight at an earlier date.

But at least the Western nations, aroused to consciousness of their danger, could now combine and equip themselves to preserve what they had left. The Communist advance produced a counter-movement; it was answered by NATO, by the Marshall Plan, by rearmament, and by "containment." No longer able to move forward in Europe without the risk of a major war, the Soviet power came to a halt. Blockade without war failed to reduce Berlin; threats and embargoes without war failed to intimidate Yugoslavia. For some time the triumphant surge of Communist revolution in the Far East served to divert attention from the stalemate that had been reached in Europe. But in the Far East, too, after a period when the West watched with equanimity, and even with approval, the Communist conquest of China, the tardy realization of an encroaching danger brought counter-measures and the raising of barriers to hold up the advance. The United Nations' intervention in Korea prevented the complete conquest of that country and the

protection of the American navy was extended to the remnant of Nationalist China in Formosa. Southward there was Communist victory in Vietnam, but a Southeast Asian defense pact committed the principal Western powers to safeguard the independence of Siam, the obvious next target of Communist attack. Thus in Asia, as in Europe, the period of big gains at small risk drew to an end. The further way forward must be either by the use of force provoking a world war, or by guile. And it is the game of guile that is now being played.

RUSSIA and China have exhausted and overdrawn the credit account of Western hopefulness and trust which was created for them at the outset by the wishful thinking of Western political leaders and the soothing propaganda that fed its illusions. The question now from a Communist point of view is how this credit account is to be built up again. The great Communist successes were gained because, during a critical period, the West was too doped, disarmed, and disunited to offer any effective opposition. The West became resolute, rearmed, and united in proportion to its growing alarm and awareness of danger, after a succession of aggressive *faits accomplis* and manifestations of hostility from the Communist side. The process has reached a point, particularly with the rearming of West Germany and Japan, at which the Sino-Soviet bloc finds itself confronted with potentially superior power and is feeling the strain of the conflict it has provoked. Weapons of economic and political warfare are now being used by the West to an extent which seriously embarrasses the Communist monolith, and mere intimidation no longer avails to scare opposing powers out of any thought of *riposte* to Communist attack.

It is clearly time to go slow, to feign innocence, to lull and to soothe, until the Western mind, ever hoping for an escape from the cold war and release from the fear of a bombing one, goes back to its happy dream-world of 1945 and forgets once more its peril. If the peoples of the West again

lose the sense of danger, if they cease to recognize the need to maintain full military preparedness, if they allow mutual dissensions to dissolve the bonds of common purpose that were drawn tight by the Berlin blockade and the Korean war, then the roads ahead will again be open to the thrusting columns of Communism on the march. The Communists' need today is for lullaby tactics, for a relaxation of tension, for co-existence and "coo-existence," to soften up the free world for the next phase of revolutionary expansion. As Lenin said in 1922, when the Soviet regime was on the defensive and had acquiesced for the time being in the independence of Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States:

When it was necessary—according to the objective situation in Russia as well as in the whole world—to advance, to attack the enemy with supreme boldness, rapidity, decisiveness, we did so attack. When it will be necessary, we shall know how to do this again and again.

When Communists speak of the "necessity" of attack, it is in accordance with their theory of history, which represents the conflict between bourgeois and proletarian as a mortal struggle which can only end with the victory of the latter throughout the world. Since the violent overthrow of capitalism without regard to national frontiers is the objective of all Communists, attack is not merely optional but "necessary," whenever the situation is deemed ripe for action. But it is the responsibility of Communist leadership to avoid premature offensives which may lead to disaster; it is a matter of watching and waiting for the right moment when the enemy can be caught unprepared or disunited. Meanwhile there can be co-existence, and even partial and temporary agreements, with the enemy, provided always, as Lenin explained, that there is no weakening of the Communists' basic hostility towards him or permanent abandonment of the ultimate aim of global revolutionary victory.

QUITE apart from the authoritative expositions of the Marxist-Leninist faith which

preclude the ideal of permanent peaceful co-existence, it might seem that the Communist states, with their recent record, have a long way to go before they can even begin to restore confidence in their good intentions. But, paradoxically, they are able to turn the very badness of the record to their advantage in publicity to the free world. Democratic opinion has grown so accustomed to expect from Communist governments nothing but truculence, vituperation, bad faith, and disregard of international law, that the slightest improvement evokes an entirely disproportionate jubilation and optimism. If an Iron Curtain government releases some unfortunate foreigner who has been held in prison for years without trial, the springtime of reconciliation is at hand; if it allows one writer to say something that it is not just a concoction from a Marxist textbook, political freedom is just around the corner; if it begins to observe some of the normal courtesies of international intercourse in its diplomatic relations, the millennium is already with us.

Ever since Stalin's death was hailed by the optimists as the beginning of a new era (for, once he was dead, all the evil of Communism could be attributed to him personally), every smallest sign of better behavior in Russia's domestic or external relations has received the most extravagant publicity in Western countries, so that there is a widespread impression of fundamental changes in the Communist outlook. It is unnecessary, therefore, for Moscow and Peking to make any real concessions in order to win approval and gratitude in the West; they have only to abate somewhat the worst of their outrages. Even the Chinese Communist imprisonment of captive American airmen in violation of the Korean armistice terms seems likely to turn out wholly to the advantage of Peking; at the time of writing the case is still in suspense, but it may be expected that, if and when Chou En-lai is graciously pleased to pardon the victims of China's bad faith, wide sections of Western opinion will greet the outcome as an outstanding act of magnanimity and good will.

THE ease with which the Communist states are able to make a favorable impression on Western public opinion by the slightest gestures of improved behavior is due primarily to the intense craving of the democratic peoples for a permanent peace and for a settlement with the Communist powers. This gives the latter an immense advantage in negotiation with democratic governments whenever tension is relaxed. In a period of acute crisis, with the issues clearly defined, as during the blockade of Berlin, a democratic government can generally count on enough popular support to enable it to make a firm stand against threats and coercion. But as soon as the strain has lessened and questions in dispute are under negotiation, the statesmen of the democracies find themselves under pressure from their peoples to reach agreement while there is no corresponding pressure on the other side. The dilemma which confronts them is that which is described by Byrnes in his memoirs as besetting him in his dealings with Russia in 1946:

The public at home did not have the clear view of Soviet ambitions which the President and I got at Potsdam and which was revealed even more clearly here in London. We had refrained, after Potsdam, from publicly expressing our concern because of our desire to maintain friendly relations with our Russian allies. . . . The Soviet leaders knew of our people's strong desire for peace and they thought we would not dare to let the conference fail.

As Byrnes's account shows, he and Bevin at that time gave way again and again to Molotov because Molotov was ready to walk out if he did not get what he wanted and they were not. Later on, and mainly because their peoples came to be more aware of Soviet aggressiveness, the Western foreign ministers acquired the habit of standing firm at conferences with the Russians and acknowledging failure to agree when no acceptable compromise could be reached. But today there are ominous signs, at least in Europe, of a return to the state of affairs which so embarrassed Byrnes and Bevin in 1946. In Britain and France the demand for a settlement with Russia through a confer-

ence of heads of governments has been growing in strength for some time, and politicians with elections in prospect are afraid of the consequences either of refusing to hold such a conference or of returning from it without the longed-for "settlement."

The Western governments have so far maintained their position that a conference cannot be considered until the agreements on European defense, including the provisions for rearming West Germany, have finally been ratified. But even if and when the process of ratification has been completed, the "situation of strength" sought by Western policy will hardly have been achieved after the deep political divisions which have been created in France and Germany, and to a lesser extent in Britain, over the question of German rearmament. The Western statesmen will then have to go to conference with political uncertainty in their rear and under strong pressure to abandon the positions they have maintained for the last five years in order to obtain the semblance of a settlement with Russia.

There is no prospect that Russia will be any more ready than hitherto to agree either to reunification of Germany on the basis of free elections or to integration of Germany in the Western defense system. Moscow may be expected to hold out for a neutralized Germany unified by amalgamation of the two existing regimes and for Western recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line. If the Western governments recognize the Oder-Neisse frontier they will alienate German national sentiment without any guarantee that Russia will not subsequently attract that sentiment by the offer of a deal at the expense of Poland; if they agree to the neutralization of a Germany in which the Communist-indoctrinated *Volkspolizei* will be at the outset the only armed force, they will renounce German integration with the West without any guarantee that an armed putsch will not sooner or later sweep Germany into the Soviet orbit. Yet it will be hard for the West to reject terms which will seem to many to provide a reasonable solution of an intolerable deadlock.

IN THE Far East, Communist hopes are probably set not so much on any direct negotiation with the Western powers as on encouragement and support of Afro-Asian neutralist maneuvers, with Communist-infested Indonesia as Stalking-horse Number One. Russia and China can indeed afford to remain in the background for a while and let Jakarta get on with the good work, rallying the Afro-Asian hosts under the banners of anti-imperialism, with Mr. Nehru doing his best not to have the limelight taken from him by his Indonesian partner. The deal by which Pakistan was induced to agree to the inclusion of Communist China on the Afro-Asian invitation list on condition that Israel be excluded showed the drift of the new bi-continental neutralism no less than Mr. Nehru's argument that America's grievance over the imprisonment of American airmen in violation of the terms of the Korean armistice was matched by Communist China's grievance because Chinese prisoners who had refused repatriation had gone to Formosa as the armistice terms entitled them to do.

The West must now face the fact that a large part of the intelligentsia of countries from Indonesia to Morocco, conditioned by the struggle for independence from colonial rule, will automatically side with China in any conflict of the latter with a Western nation, and will regard any Western participation in a collective security system in the Far East as a manifestation of imperialism. Acts of open aggression by Russia or China in Asia would no doubt modify this attitude, but if they refrain for the present from any move against India or Burma and concentrate on backing the Vietminh under cover of the ambiguous Geneva agreements, they will have an excellent prospect of retaining and increasing the sympathies of the Afro-Asian bloc and driving new wedges into the cracks in the unity of the free world.

THE Communists may also reasonably hope to obtain from a phase of peaceful co-existence the removal of all restrictions on

world trade in strategic materials and the cessation of the political warfare by radio and leaflet which has been the West's tardy, but effective, response to the subversive propaganda of international Communism. The ending of economic restrictions would enable the Communist countries, and particularly China, rapidly to increase their war potential, while the Western nations, increasingly convinced that the danger of war was over, would be less and less willing to divert their resources into armaments.

There is no prospect of an agreement for reduction of armaments that would provide for really effective inspection on the other side of the Iron Curtain; no progress has been made in any disarmament talks towards overcoming this supreme obstacle. There is, however, a great danger that the Western peoples, in their longing for peace, might be induced, after an apparent improvement in the international situation, to enter into an agreement which would tie their hands, but not those of the other side.

To persuade the West to call off its political warfare is a no less important objective for the Communist powers, for they are profoundly disturbed by any influence which impinges on their monopoly of thought-control and news inside their own territories. Their fear of foreign broadcasts has been proved by the immense trouble they have taken to jam them. They can well afford to offer a formal reciprocity for a call-off in this form of conflict, for, whereas the free world has no way of speaking to the peoples of Communist-governed states except by radio and leaflet-balloon, propaganda on the air is only a small part of the Communist states' publicity to the free world, the greater part of it being carried on by the Communist parties and fellow-travelers within each country.

Nevertheless, as soon as there are any signs of a *détente* in relations with the Soviet bloc, there will be strong pressure for a ban on anything unpleasant being said either to or about Communist states, so that no offense may be given to their notoriously sensitive leaders.

IF THIS estimate of prospects is valid, it follows that the Communists have more to gain at the present time from a period of peaceful co-existence than from attempts to break down by force the very considerable strength which is now arrayed against them. Insofar as they have been driven to fall back on co-existence after the previous period of expansion, it is because of the situation of strength which has already been built up by the principal powers of the free world since they became aware of their danger. But the very restraint which has been imposed on Communist dynamism by the barriers raised against it will now be taken widely as evidence that the Communists do not any longer harbor any aggressive designs and that there is therefore no longer any need to take precautions against them. Herein lies the

chance for Communist diplomacy and propaganda to dissolve the free world's situation of strength and create the conditions for a fresh advance towards world revolution.

The only safeguard there can be against such disintegration is a firm will not to enter into agreements which yield vital interests for the sake of the mere appearance of reconciliation and vague hopes of future good will. The destiny of the Western democracies in the years ahead will depend on how well they have learned the lessons of Munich and Yalta, on how far experience has taught them to beware of the facile attraction of policies of appeasement. One knows that in the last resort they will fight for their freedom; the question is whether they can bring themselves in good time so to act that they will never need to fight.